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## THE POLITICAL PROGRESS OF THE ENGLISH WORKINGMAN

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The first fifty years of the nineteenth century were very significant years in the political progress of the workingman not so much for what he actually gained in political power—he gained indeed almost nothing—but for what he learned about it. They educated him for citizenship. So many factors contributed to his education that if I were to consider them all, or even hint at them all, I should be led too far afield. Certainly I should have to trace the development of popular education and the rise of the cheap newspaper press. But in the time at my command I shall have to neglect these broader cultural aspects of the question and confine myself to matters of more immediate significance.

The economic factor can certainly not be neglected. Probably it was the most potent of all forces which drove the modern workingman into politics. He was never much of a political thinker, and neither political nor social theories appealed to him particularly strongly upon their abstract merits. He was merely a poor man trying to provide bread and butter for himself and his family in a hard world. When he was hungry and cold he was ready to support all kinds of plans for change. When he was not he was usually content to leave the mysteries of government to his betters. Consequently his progress in politics was spasmodic. It made fair headway in periods of industrial depression; it came virtually to a standstill in periods of industrial prosperity. But the stages of his political progress by no means corresponded with the stages in the progress of political reform. By a strange perverseness, the times when the workingman put forth his greatest efforts to effect a change were, generally speaking, the times in which the least change was made. The ruling classes would not be coerced, and the arguments in favor of enfranchising the workingman lost force in proportion as he showed himself to be a violent and a turbulent fellow.

During the Napoleonic Wars the English workingman was on the whole better off than he had been before them or than he was to be after them. Notwithstanding Napoleon's attempts to strangle the English shopkeeper English industry gained more than it lost by war conditions. Prices were high, the demand for commodities generally exceeded the

supply, and though wages did not increase in proportion to prices there was plenty of work to be had. It cannot be said that the English workingman was contented during this period, but at least his discontent was not so great but that it could be easily held in check by the stern, repressive policy of the government.

With the ending of the wars in 1815 there came a very decided change for the worse. For one thing the crops were bad, for another the English factories anticipating an enormous demand from the Continent produced far more than impoverished Europe, eager as it was to buy, could absorb. English warehouses were in consequence glutted with goods. English factories shut down and the English workingman found himself out of a job just at the time when bad harvests and bad corn laws were conspiring together to make the cost of living higher than ever. Out of this condition of affairs was born active industrial discontent, which in the course of the next two or three years expressed itself in all sorts of violent forms. Much of it was mere hunger crying for bread; much of it the blind striking out of desperate men convinced that their condition could be no worse and might be better. In general it lacked organization and it lacked leadership. On that account it submitted readily to the guidance of popular demagogues like Hunt the orator and Cobbett the journalist. Neither Hunt nor Cobbett was himself of the industrial working class. Both of them were in fact country bred and both began their political careers as staunch supporters of the established order. Both also were converted to the cause of parliamentary reform rather through contact with upper-class radicals than through more popular channels. They addressed their appeal not to the workingmen in particular but to the unrepresented classes in general, and the political agitation which developed under their stimulus cannot be accurately designated a workingman's movement, though it recruited most of its strength in the great industrial centers of the north. Their program was modest enough. It involved little more than a moderate extension of the franchise. They were able to accomplish such spectacular performances in its support as the assembly of 80,000 in St. Peter's Fields at Manchester. But they did not succeed even by such tremendous demonstrations in converting the governing classes. The official answer to the crowd in St. Peter's Fields was the Peterloo Massacre, and the official counter-check to public meetings and cheap newspapers was to prohibit the one and suppress the other. For these and for other reasons, among which improving business was not the least, the agitation died down after 1820. Immediately it led nowhere, but it was not with-

out its value in the political progress of the workingman. It served much more effectually than the revolutionary societies to awaken his political consciousness and it gave him for all time to come his cheap newspaper.

Perhaps also it did serve indirectly to quicken an interest in political reform among the governing classes. It is, however, probable that the peace and prosperity which followed 1820 were a great deal more effective in promoting reform than were the disturbances and distress of the years which preceded. Anyway, during the 1820's the cause of parliamentary reform gained steadily in strength until it won for itself a place in the program of the Whig opposition. Exactly what the Whigs proposed to do about it was not made clear. There were radicals in the party like Sir Francis Burdett who favored the complete enfranchisement of the workingman. The leaders were not prepared to go that far. They were indeed rather noncommittal, but the man in the street got the impression that when they came into power they would amend matters.

When the Whigs came into power in 1830 they brought forward a bill to extend the franchise and to rearrange the electoral districts. As a concession to the workingman this Great Reform Bill was a complete disappointment. It gave him, in short, nothing, but it admitted at least the necessity for change and it made the way easier for further changes later on. On these grounds he was led to support it. Of course he could do no more than exert pressure from the outside. But some pressure he did exert. How much it is impossible to say. In Birmingham and in London clever middle-class leaders like Atwood and Place were able to organize large political unions in support of the bill, and these unions though they were not workingmen's associations included a large working-class element. There was also a good deal of workingman striking and and workingman machine-smashing, though probably not much of this was consciously designed to coerce the reluctant king and the even more reluctant House of Lords. This much is clear, that the Great Reform Bill was emphatically not a concession to the demands of the workingman notwithstanding that he did exert some of his strength outside of Parliament to assist in its final passage.

By long-concerted shouting for "the Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill" the English workingman had persuaded himself that with the passage of the Bill all his woes would end. He soon discovered that all his efforts had merely served to advance the political fortunes of the shopkeepers. His enthusiasm gave place to disillusionment, and this disillusionment was simply embittered when the first reformed Parliament met and proceeded to amend the old Poor Law in such a fashion

as to rob him of the casual relief he had heretofore received from the state in hard times. No doubt there was much to be said for this measure, but to the poor man who had looked hopefully forward to redemption at the hands of the new Parliament it seemed like a piece of cold and calculated tyranny. On the whole he felt that he had lost rather than gained by intermeddling in middle-class politics. The immediate effect was to disgust him with parliamentary reform and to impel him strongly toward socialism.

An undercurrent of socialism runs through the political course of the English workingman from the early 1820's onward. He has never pinned his faith to the nostrums of the Socialists with anything like the fervor which the German workingman has, but he has been tempted to try them again and again, particularly at times when the hope of relief by political action seemed unusually desperate.

It would take too long to trace the history of English socialism from its simple communistic beginnings in the Middle Ages to the position which it had reached when Robert Owen began to preach its gospel in New Lanark. Its rapid development in the 1820's was largely the product of industrial distress. The general position of the Socialists of that time was that the existing industrial evils were the inevitable result of private ownership of the means of production. Some of them were merely concerned with pointing out that fact. Others were ready with remedies. The extremists like Thomas Hodgkin frankly advocated class war. The moderates like John Gray and William Thompson deprecated conflict, and argued strongly for a system based upon mutual aid and co-operation. The solution which Owen himself proposed was the establishment of small communities run upon a co-operative basis in which the inhabitants were to work together and to share the results of their labor in common. Some of these men were merely closet philosophers, but some of them set out at once to win the workingman to their way of thinking. Owen, as is well known, actually established model communities to demonstrate his theories and published a newspaper in London to expound them. Hodgkin lectured in workingmen's clubs. And there can be no doubt that even before the Great Reform Bill was passed their ideas were widespread among the working classes.

The medium which served the best purpose in disseminating them was the trade union, from which the legal ban had been removed in 1824.

During the two years following 1832 the trade unions not only grew rapidly in numbers but they also developed rapidly in organization. And they became strongly imbued with socialistic ideas, particularly of the Owenite variety. Unorganized workers organized, allied unions began

to federate. In the early spring of 1834 under Owen's own guidance a Grand Consolidated Union of all the trades was created in London. Owen, still true to his pacifistic purposes, had no notion that this organization should be used to coerce the capitalists. There were others, however, like William Benbow who thought differently and who saw in it an instrument by which they might violently overthrow the whole bad state of industrial society. This group preached the gospel of direct action and the general strike, and tried to draw the Grand Consolidated after them. Owen's influence was strong enough to prevent their success, though he never came anywhere near achieving his own purposes. His consolidated union had a short, a quarrelsome, and a thoroughly unproductive life.

But the forces which destroyed it were not so much the contentions at headquarters as the general failure which attended the efforts of local trade unions to enforce their local demands. There was an enormous number of local strikes in the years 1833 and '34, provoked generally by the old grievances, but inspired often by hazy visions of a better industrial order. They were for the most part badly organized and badly led and notwithstanding the imposing aspect of their national federation they lacked any real unity of action or of purpose. Their widespread character frightened the employing classes and even frightened the government, but the measures which were taken against them were in excess of the requirements. All that was really needed was a little patience in order that starvation might work its way. In the end starvation was the *force majeure* which overcame them.

As a step in the political progress of the workingman this trade-union movement of the early 1830's deserves attention rather for what it failed to do than for what it did. Its political program, if it had any political program at all, was the overthrow of the existing industrial order. Its method of procedure, so far as there was any method in its madness, was the industrial strike. In a rather ill-defined sort of way it represented an early adventure of the English workingman in revolutionary syndicalism. And its failure served very effectually, in England at any rate, to discredit that way to the millennium. Immediately it had a disastrous effect upon the trade unions. Many were dissolved, and those which survived suffered a large loss of membership. And it developed in them also a cautious and a canny attitude. Thereafter, for over a generation to come they abandoned politics altogether, they turned their eyes resolutely away from the beatific visions of the socialists and addressed themselves to the grim business of wringing a decent living out of the world as it was.

But outside the narrow limits of the trade-union world hope was not yet dead, though it was chastened. The flower of that hope was the Chartist Movement.

It is difficult to generalize about Chartism, so many elements went into the making of it, but the essential fact about it is that it was a workingman's movement, the first great movement to be engineered and controlled by workingmen in modern times. In its more orderly aspects it did not differ greatly from the modern English labor movement, though of course it was dealing with unfranchised workers and not with voters. Its ultimate purposes were socialistic, though the socialism of its leaders was of the Owenite not of the Marxian variety. But its immediate purposes were political. The People's Charter which embodied its program was in brief a demand that the workingman should enjoy an equal place in the body politic with every other class in the community, that he should be able not only to vote but to sit in Parliament. The expectation of its leaders was that once the workingman was able to exert his strength at the polls, the social revolution would easily and peaceably be brought about by due process of law. But they directed their efforts toward winning the vote.

The movement began with a small group of Owenites in London who still kept the faith and still preached it. William Lovett, a cabinet-maker, and Henry Hetherington, a compositor, were the conspicuous members of the group. In 1829 they had organized a small society of London workingmen for the propagation of Owenite ideas. During the agitation for the Reform Bill they stood aloof, and they took very little part in the trade-union movement which followed it. Their enthusiasm for the reorganization of society upon a co-operative basis remained undiminished and they were satisfied that the change could only be effected by the transfer of industrial control from the capitalists to the workers. They were, however, unalterably opposed to class war, not only because it was inconsistent with the principle of co-operation, but also because they thought it unnecessary. They had sufficient faith in the validity of their ideas to believe that in the long run they would win the support of all classes upon their merits. We should perhaps classify Lovett and his colleagues among the Utopians. But seven years of successive disappointments had taught them this much practical wisdom, that the best ideas in the world could not be realized without organized effort and a definite plan of procedure. From 1836 onward they began to concern themselves much less with the proclamation of their purposes and much more with the devising of ways and means. They came to perceive that

the peaceful way to deliverance lay through the ballot box, and, though they always regarded parliamentary reform merely as a means to larger social ends, they were satisfied that once the working classes could exert their numerical strength at the polls the rest would be easy. So they undertook to prepare a program of political reform and to rally the workingmen in England at large to the support of it. In such wise the Chartist Movement of the late 1830's and the 1840's was born.

It took its name, of course, from the People's Charter which Lovett drafted with Place's assistance and published in 1838. The contents of this famous document embodied very little that was new. Many of its demands had been put forward by the Levellers in the seventeenth century. They were briefly six—manhood suffrage, vote by ballot, abolition of property qualifications for membership in Parliament, equal electoral districts, and annual parliaments. These demands looked radical enough in 1838, but the best proof that they did not imply revolution lies in the fact that every one of them except the last has since been realized by the peaceful, constitutional methods which Lovett advocated. Indeed, in the People's Charter, Lovett pretty clearly defined the course which parliamentary reform in England was subsequently to follow.

In formulating their program Lovett and his coadjutors could draw upon the accumulated wisdom of at least two centuries of effort. Their more difficult problem lay in organizing popular support behind it, for precedent there offered them no guide though it furnished many warnings. The political unions of 1832 had accomplished much but their strength had been recruited largely from the middle classes and their effort had registered merely a middle-class triumph. Lovett's followers were determined that they would have no repetition of that performance. At the beginning anyway they were resolved to confine their organization to the working classes. The trade unions offered an alternative, but the trade unions had already tried and failed and were in no temper for a further effort. The organization upon which Lovett and his friends finally hit was an association of workers, the objects of which, as he himself stated them, was "*to draw into one bond of unity the intelligent and influential working classes in town and country, to seek by every legal means to place all classes of society in possession of equal political and social rights.*" Its membership was rigidly restricted to genuine workingmen, though a few honorary members, like Francis Place, were admitted from the middle class. It did not discriminate between industrial and agricultural workers and it clearly rested upon quite a different foundation from the



trade unions. Most of its subsequent strength was, however, drawn from the trades.

The organization began with the foundation of a Workingman's Association in London in 1836 which set about at once to encourage the formation of similar associations in the country at large. It issued pamphlets, it published a newspaper, in the spring of 1837 it began to send forth missionaries. And everywhere its propaganda met with amazing success. Before the end of 1837 over a hundred workingmen's associations modeled after its pattern and supporting its program had sprung into being. But its influence was not confined to orderly little debating societies. In the north its ideas took hold like wildfire not so much because of their reasonable appeal as because the north was seething once more with industrial discontent. The year 1836 marked the beginning of another industrial depression in the great northern manufacturing centers which grew more serious in 1837 and 1838. It was attended by its usual accompaniments, decreasing wages and increasing unemployment. The industrial workers began to grow hungry from lack of food and cold from lack of firewood. They became desperate, violent, ready to grasp at anything which promised relief. Whatever Chartism was to thoughtful men like Lovett and Hetherington, in the north it was a cry of distress, the shout of men, women, and children drowning in deep waters. Carlyle called it the bitter discontent grown fierce and wild. Stephens, one of its own leaders, declared that it was not a political question but a knife-and-fork question. There were in fact two distinct elements in the Chartist Movement almost from the first: there was the moderate element with a well-digested program, a definite organization, and a deliberate plan of action, and there was a vast disorganized incoherent element shouting for the Charter because for very misery they had to shout for something and careless of means so long as deliverance in some form came quickly.

So far as Lovett and the moderates were able to direct its course Chartism remained true to its original program and its original plan of action. Its organization reached perhaps its highest perfection in 1840 when all the local associations were grouped in county units and a central executive committee was established in London. Its constitutional course of action was the circulation of petitions among its members and the presentation of these petitions to the House of Commons. All this was as it should be and well within the law. The difficulty was that it buttered no bread, and though Lovett and his moderates might be willing to repeat the process indefinitely the hungry men in the north lost

patience. They became a prey in consequence to hot-headed demagogues like Fergus O'Connor who sneered at Lovett and his "moral philosophers" and preached the gospel of physical force. How far O'Connor himself favored an actual appeal to arms is difficult to determine. He had a way of denying on Tuesday what he had affirmed on Monday. But at all events the effect of his teaching was, on the one hand, to drive the moderates out of the movement and on the other to encourage acts of violence which brought down upon Chartism the full force of the law. It was the influence of men like O'Connor that provoked the Newport Rising in 1839 and accounted for the attempt to organize a general strike, better known as the Plug Plot, in 1842. Both of these attempts were ridiculous failures. The fact was that though the O'Connorites were good stump orators, as organizers and leaders of violent revolution they lacked every essential virtue. Yet O'Connor was the commanding figure in the movement from 1842 until almost the end. He was not a workingman, he was not even an Englishman. His qualifications were his rollicking Irish personality and his exceptional capacity for self-advertisement. As a type of workingman agitator he is not unfamiliar even in these enlightened times. The chief instrument of his control, omitting his glib tongue, was his newspaper, the *Northern Star*, which he was able by astute journalism to make the one single organ of the Chartist world. There is some reason to believe that he was not above promoting agitation as a means of increasing its circulation. Anyway he was perhaps the single figure in the movement who managed to make Chartism pay handsomely.

His breach with Lovett and the moderates had the effect of driving them toward middle-class radicalism and for a time in 1842 it looked as though there might be a coalition of the two elements in Joseph Sturge's Complete Suffrage Movement. But middle-class contempt for working-class leaders and the refusal of Sturge and his associates to indorse the Charter as it stood prevented. Yet the attempt was of importance, for it indicated the weakening of class antagonism on both sides and foreshadowed the alliance of labor and liberalism which came later.

In view of the fact that most of what the Chartists strove for has since been achieved it is hard to reproach them with failure. Yet fail they did, for the cause which they fought for had not the slightest measure of success until long after they had ceased to fight. The reasons for their failure were manifold. The inevitable incapacity of their leaders and the dissensions among them had a great deal to do with it. The opposition of the middle classes, supported by the whole power of the

state, had a great deal to do with it also. Probably one of the most important factors was the lack of correspondency between their program and their real purpose. The strength of Chartism lay in its protest against social and industrial evils which the famous six points scarcely touched. It was political in its form but social in its content. On that account its development and its decline were really determined by what Carlyle called the condition-of-England question. Its strength ebbed and flowed with the flow and ebb of industrial prosperity. The forces which gave it birth were much more the desperate state of the north than they were the reasonable principles of Lovett and his friends. It languished during the relatively prosperous years between 1842 and 1845; the temporary depression of 1847 combined with the general unrest which prevailed in Europe in 1848 revived it for a season, but it petered out in the 1850's for lack of food to feed upon. The arguments in favor of the Charter were just as valid in the fifties as they had been in the early forties but the driving force of misery was lacking, or at any rate was greatly weakened. Whether it was because the repeal of the Corn Laws had cheapened bread, or because factory legislation had corrected some of the worst abuses of the system, or because in the general prosperity there was more work to be had and better wages to be earned, the workingman was enough better off in the 1850's to lose interest in political panaceas however much they promised. Things appeared to be coming his way in the natural course of events and with bread on the table and a fire on the hearth he could afford to bide his time.

Notwithstanding all of which he was a wiser man and a better man for his experience, and if not directly yet ultimately Chartism contributed largely to his political progress. It was his first great political effort of modern times and it taught him lessons in self-government and self-control which he badly needed to learn and which were to stand him in good stead later. It revealed him also in rather less lurid colors to the governing classes and showed him to be neither so stupid nor so terrible as their untutored imaginations had painted him. And so, although it was essentially a class movement, it helped to break down class barriers and to prepare the way for that mutual respect upon which modern democracy must be based.

The collapse of Chartism drove the workingman once again away from parliamentary reform and into trade unionism. And his political activity during the next thirty years was in the main exerted through his trade-union organization. Indeed the history of his political progress from the 1850's to the present day is by and large the history of the po-

litical progress of the English trade unions. This is not altogether so, but it is so nearly so that the development of trade unionism is easily the most important factor to be considered.

The trade unions revealed a truly remarkable growth during the two decades following 1850, a growth not only in numbers but also in the development of their organization. For one thing they became more business-like. A few bitter experiences revealed to them the fact that the ordinary *workingman*, however honest and however popular he might be, did not necessarily make a good administrative officer or a good financial manager. This was a useful lesson in itself, and its educational value was far-reaching. Immediately it resulted in the rise of a new type of trade-union official who was selected for the purpose by reason of his superior business capacity and who was paid a salary in order that he might devote his whole time to the task. This meant that trade unions got to be better led and better organized, that their funds were more judiciously managed and their strength more wisely exerted. For another thing, the trade unions began to amalgamate. Local unions of the same trade drew together into national confederations, unions of allied trades combined. The first great amalgamation of this sort was that of the engineering trades under the leadership of William Allan. This example was followed by the carpenters under Robert Applegarth, and this in turn by others. By 1860 a number of the more important trades were united in great national unions with headquarters in London and branches in every important industrial center in England.

One effect of this national consolidation in the same trade was to enable the national unions of different trades more readily to co-operate. Their leaders in London came into almost daily contact one with the other and a small group of them presently emerged as the guiding spirits of the whole organized English labor world. Of these William Allan, the engineer, Robert Applegarth, the carpenter, Daniel Guile, of the iron founders, Edmund Coulson, of the bricklayers, and George Ogden, of the shoemakers, were the conspicuous figures. They were all close friends, all men of high character and exceptional business capacity, all men of the world, not easily to be distinguished by their dress or their manners or their educational equipment from the rank and file of the employers who confronted them. In themselves as well as in their solidarity they contributed greatly to the strength of the trade-union cause. Workingmen as they were, and in absolute sympathy with their untutored followers, they were yet able to meet and deal with business men and politicians on their own ground and in their own jargon. The day

of the workingman leader with a knotted bandana about his throat, who stood fumbling his cap before his betters, was past.

These new leaders were in an admirable position to direct the strength of the workingman toward political reform and they might have done so had not the memory of Chartist failures created in the minds of their constituents a strong aversion from any further intermeddling in such matters. This aversion was strongly reflected in the local trade unions. It was not in fact to any marked degree overcome before the very end of the last century. The only kind of political activity which the local trades were disposed to countenance was the kind which sought to secure legislation favorable to their own union interests. They felt strong enough to fight their own battles. All they wanted was a free field and no favor. And this attitude was generally speaking reflected in the political conduct of their leaders. Allan, Applegarth, and the rest were more interested in securing the passage of laws admitting the trade unions to legal status and conceding their right to strike than they were in promoting the extension of the franchise or a fair arrangement of electoral districts. Indeed the local trades even looked askance at an increase of government control or of government regulation of industrial affairs. It was not until the 1880's that they were prepared to indorse bills for shortening the hours of labor or providing for unemployment. All such matters they felt could better be arranged by free barter, supported by the boycott and the strike. In fact, both in his political and in his social creed the organized workingman of the 1870's was as ardent a supporter of the principles of *laissez faire* as was the stoutest Corn Leaguer in Manchester.

The consequence was that organized labor as such played a very small part in the promotion of the parliamentary reform bills of 1867 and of 1884. We should expect to find the industrial workers in particular very much interested in the agitation for the extension of the franchise in the 1860's since its main purpose was to secure the vote for them. Yet it was not until Gladstone's reform bill of 1866 had been defeated that they took any concerted action, and then it proceeded from a non-descript organization which sprang up in opposition to the amalgamated trades. And it is not recorded that even this body accomplished any more than one single demonstration at Chelsea. No doubt workingmen gathered in crowds and shouted for reform. They even broke windows and tore up fence railings. But there have always been a sufficient number of them available to stage performances of that sort for any cause. Almost every crowd that has ever gathered has been mainly a working-

man's crowd, but it has not always by any means represented a workingman's movement, though it has sometimes been convenient to describe it as such.

It may as well be admitted that the real strength behind every reform bill passed in the nineteenth century was middle-class strength and the sentiments which formulated them middle-class sentiments. They did not come in response to the demands of the unfranchised workers but in response to a reasonable conviction on the part of those who already enjoyed political power. They mark important stages in the political progress of the workingman in that they gradually elevated him to a position in which he could exercise political power. But the gift was conferred from above, not exacted from below. And it registers rather the progress of the middle classes toward democracy than any real progress of the workingman in politics.

With the passage of Disraeli's reform bill in 1867 the rank and file of the workmen got the vote and the opportunity which they had long demanded, of exerting their strength at the polls. In the days of the Levellers or of the Chartists this would have appeared a long stride toward the millennium. But the steps which the workingman of 1867 took to realize his new opportunity were feeble and halting to say the least. Trade-union officials confined their efforts to urging the workers to make sure that their names got on the voting lists. The only attempt at an organized labor party was the creation of a Labour Representation League in London in 1869, formed mainly for the return of workmen to Parliament. But even that did not get under way until after the first election under the new Reform Bill, and until 1874 it did not succeed in securing the return of a single workingman's candidate to Parliament. This meager result was partly due to the League's lack of resources, but it was mainly due to the failure of the workingman to support his own fellows. From the very first he showed his preference for candidates of social position. His class feeling, which was strong enough in his industrial organization, he did not carry over into political action. Other sentiments, far older sentiments, prevailed with him there—deference for those above him in social station, old traditions of a ruling class, distrust of his own capacity to sustain the political and particularly the social responsibilities of public office. We may say if we like that he had not yet thrown off the habits of mind formed under a feudal régime. At any rate he was, in 1868, no more a democrat than those above him. No labor party was formed in that year because no labor party could be formed. Labor itself would not suffer it. And the immediate effect of

giving the workingman the vote was simply to increase the constituents of the two old parties. The workingman does not seem to have discriminated much between the two. The Conservatives won almost as much support from him in the three elections following 1867 as did the Liberals.

Yet it is undoubted that his influence in politics was very strikingly increased by his securing of the franchise. Though no labor party came at once into existence a labor vote did. It would have been more effective if it had been better organized, but it was there, old party leaders realized that it was there and began to adjust their program accordingly.

They began also to listen with more deference to the demands of trade-union officials. In 1868 an annual congress of all the trade unions was established, and it met thereafter regularly in London and regularly appointed a parliamentary committee to look after the interests of the trade unions in Parliament. Allan, Applegarth, and their group dominated this committee and through it they were able to exercise a great deal of influence on legislation. It does not appear that they made any systematic attempt to align the labor vote in support of their parliamentary program. Nevertheless a connection existed. There is, for example, good reason to believe that the Liberals were defeated in the elections of 1874 because of Gladstone's refusal to repeal the law against strikes.

It has been remarked more than once that trade unionism in England thrives in prosperous times and declines in periods of industrial depression. We may then ascribe the remarkable growth of trade unions between 1867 and 1875 in large part to the extraordinarily favorable business conditions which prevailed during those years. In 1874 this prosperity suddenly came to an end and was followed by a long period of hard times. The effect upon the workingman was as usual very distressing. Wages went down, hours went up, unemployment increased by leaps and bounds. The trade unions, which were almost all of them mutual-benefit societies, were hard put to it to provide support for their idle members. It was futile to organize strikes when employers were only too glad of an excuse to close down their factories for a season. In fact the trade unions were helpless to cope with a situation which was rapidly becoming desperate. The politicians were equally helpless. Liberal leaders were prepared to support a further extension of the franchise, but it was pretty clear that the franchise would not feed the hungry and clothe the naked. Yet the politicians had nothing further to suggest.

But the Socialists had. Once more they appeared upon the scene, and this time they brought a quiver full of arguments borrowed from the

armory of Karl Marx himself. Their new gospel was not in essentials so very different from their old one. Like Owen they insisted that the recurrent evils of industrial society sprang from the defects of the industrial organization. Like Owen they denounced capitalistic control of the means of production and demanded for the workingman the whole produce of his labor. But in place of Owen's co-operative communities they proposed to substitute national control. Most of them agreed with Lovett that the means of salvation lay through the ballot box and they intended to accomplish social revolution by organizing the full voting strength of the workingman in its support.

Their program demanded immediate political action and it ran counter to the accepted policy of the Amalgamated Trades. Nevertheless they found stout champions in the trade-union ranks, particularly in John Burns and Tom Mann. For something like five years these ardent young socialists contended in the Trade Union Congresses with the old champions of *laissez faire* trade unionism. And in 1890, thanks partly to the great victory of Burns and Mann in the dock-workers' strike of 1889, they finally won the day. The effect of their success was far-reaching. It involved the definite abandonment by the trade unions of their old policy of letting general politics alone and committed them to a program of social legislation for which they could hardly expect support from either of the existing parties.

It was from this new unionism of the early 1890's that the English Labour Party was born in 1899. Its birthday marks the definite re-entry of the trade union into the field of general politics. It marks even more than that. It marks the beginning of an effort on the part of the trade unions to dominate the politics of the workingman. For the English Labour Party as it was originally constituted limited its membership to trade unionists and to members of a few relatively small affiliated organizations. Naturally it courted the support of the whole workingman vote, but it made no place for unorganized labor in its councils. It was in fact a party run in the interests of labor by a trade-union committee.

It first began to play an active part in politics in the election of 1905. Before that time workingmen had been elected to Parliament. Indeed a scattered few had won seats in every election since 1874, but their success represented the result of local efforts and they stood on no common platform, though they did attempt to follow a concerted plan of action after they took their seats. Usually they went by the name of the Liberal-Labour group. In the election of 1906 the new labor party secured the return of twenty-nine members. These, combined with the Liberal-Labour group, gave the workingman a fighting strength of some fifty



in the House of Commons. In the election of 1910 they lost a few seats, but by reason of the more evenly balanced strength of the two great parties their parliamentary position was really stronger.

From 1906 until the outbreak of the war they worked in close harmony with the Liberals and their influence upon liberal policy was very considerable. If one considers the social legislation passed in the House of Commons since 1905 the strength of that influence is apparent. Old-age pensions, national insurance against sickness, disability, and unemployment, child-welfare acts, sweatshop regulations, minimum wage laws, and national employment bureaus—all of these demanded by Labor have been conceded by Liberalism. In fact the whole trend of social legislation during the last two decades in England has to a considerable extent justified the assertion that Labor was leading Liberalism by the nose.

From the point of view of that democratic ideal which admits no distinction between class and class the fundamental defect of the English Labour Party as it existed before the war was that it did create such a distinction and sought to emphasize it. Practically the only group outside the organized-labor group which it admitted to its councils was the Socialists. Though it did not indorse class war it provided the means for it and offered special privileges to the one group in the middle-class ranks which preached it. It had another grave defect in that it did not completely represent the very workingmen whom it aimed to serve because it was fundamentally a federation of trade unionists and not a free-for-all workingman's party. The Great War just passed revealed to its leaders both of these defects and set them at work to correct them. In 1917 the Labour Party was completely reorganized. Instead of a trade-union affair it was converted into a national democratic party, which, though recognizing the unions, based its organization upon local party associations. Membership in these associations was thrown open to every hand worker and brain worker who accepted the constitution of the party and subscribed to its program. In fact the Labour Party virtually placed itself upon the same footing as the other two great parties in the kingdom. It not only threw off the shackles of the trade unions but it also definitely rejected the Marxian principle of political organization along class lines. For though it proposed to limit its membership to hand workers and brain workers there were few in England who would fail technically to qualify under one or the other of these categories. At the same time it stated its program rather more explicitly than it ever had before, but with no essential change. Arthur Henderson stands today on much the same platform that William Lovett stood

80 years ago—a reorganization of industrial society along socialistic lines to be accomplished gradually and by due process of law. Lovett would perhaps have deleted the word *gradually*, but labor leaders were more hopeful of an immediate millennium in his day than they are now.

I have paid a great deal of attention to the evolution of the Labour Party because it is the one political movement of present-day England which has been beyond question a workingman movement. But it never has commanded anything like the full strength of the workingman in politics. The best showing it ever made in a parliamentary election was in December, 1918, when it returned sixty-one members to the House of Commons out of a total of over six hundred. This means that the majority of the workingmen never have supported the Labour Party platform at the polls. Most of them are still to be found in the ranks of the Liberals and of the Conservatives. And the influence of the workingman in modern English politics has been much more potent in modifying the program of the old middle-class parties than it has been in promoting the program of its own. The practical consideration behind the reorganization of the Labour Party in 1917 was probably the realization by its leaders after nearly forty years of effort that class politics, successful as they were in continental Europe, could not be made to go in England. The Labour Party as a workingman's party was a failure, and it was on the whole well for English democracy that it was so. For democracy must build its hopes not on class distinction but on class co-operation, not on interests which conflict but on interests which conform.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

There is a great mass of literature bearing on almost every phase of this subject though there is nothing which deals with it as a whole. It may be worth while to suggest some of the more useful books for a more detailed study. On the early craft guilds one of the best brief accounts is in E. Lipson, *An Introduction to the Economic History of England*, I, chap. vii. On the decay of the craft guilds, cf. G. Unwin, *Industrial Organization in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, and also, for less detailed accounts, W. J. Ashley, *The Economic Organization of England*, chaps. ii, v; and J. A. Hobson, *The Evolution of Modern Capitalism*. For the Levellers Movement, G. P. Gooch, *English Democratic Ideas in the Seventeenth Century*, and T. C. Pease, *The Levellers Movement*, may be consulted. There is no single adequate study of the Industrial Revolution in English. Its earlier phases are admirably discussed in P. Mantoux, *La Révolution industrielle au XVIII<sup>me</sup> siècle en Angleterre*. There are three volumes by J. L. and Barbara Hammond which cover well the effect of the Industrial Revolution upon the workingman. They are entitled: (1) *The*

*Village Labourer, 1760-1832*; (2) *The Town Labourer, 1760-1822*; (3) *The Skilled Labourer, 1760-1832*. The effect of the French Revolution upon political reform in England is well handled in G. S. Veitch, *The Genesis of Parliamentary Reform*, and in E. R. Kent, *The Early English Radicals*. A convenient annual survey of economic conditions in England from 1800 to 1832 will be found in W. Smart, *Economic Annals of the Nineteenth Century*. G. Slater, *The Making of Modern England*, chaps. i, iv, is particularly good on the situation immediately following the Napoleonic Wars. For the unrest associated with the passage of the Great Reform Bill, cf. J. R. M. Butler, *The Passing of the Great Reform Bill*, chaps. i, iii, vi. G. Wallas, *Life of Francis Place*, is easily the best thing on the political unions of 1832. The rise of English socialism and the views of the English socialist of the 1820's are well treated in M. Beer, *A History of English Socialism*, I.

On the origin of the English trade unions and on their whole history there is one excellent book, S. and B. Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, of which a new edition has just appeared. Cf. also George Howell, *Labour Legislation, Labour Movements and Labour Leaders*. On contemporary English trade unions the *English Labour Year Book*, particularly the volume for 1916, contains a fund of excellent material. The Chartist Movement has been much written about in English and in German, though the best study is in French, i.e., E. Dolléans, *Le Chartisme, 1830-48*. In English the best single account is by Mark Hovell, *The Chartist Movement*; cf. also F. F. Rosenblatt, *The Chartist Movement in Its Social and Economic Aspects*, and F. W. Slosson, *The Decline of the Chartist Movement*. On the relations of the workingman to politics since Chartism there is very little of value. The Webbs give something in their *History of Trade Unions* and G. Howell rather more in his study of labor movements cited above. One phase of it is treated very superficially in A. W. Humphrey, *A History of Labour Representation*. Unfortunately there is no study comparable to Butler's *Passing of the Great Reform Bill* for the later reform bills of 1867 and 1884. Charles Seymour, *Electoral Reform in England and Wales*, chap. x, contains a good account of the way in which the labor vote was cast between 1867 and 1884. The history of the modern English Labour Party has yet to be written, though there is an excellent summary of the main facts in the *English Labour Year Book for 1916*; cf. also, for a rather unsympathetic account, A. L. Lowell, *The Government of England*, II, chap. xxxiii, which brings the story down to 1908. The program of the Labour Party as stated in 1917 and the reorganization in that year is very well explained in A. Henderson, *The Aims of Labour*. For a sympathetic treatment of the workingman in current English politics the English weekly, the *New Statesman*, is perhaps the best place to look. Sidney Webb's occasional contributions to the *New Republic* are excellent though not always unbiased.